

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00
PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01
SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 SSM-03 /080 W
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P 061153Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7953
AMEMBASSY DOHA
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 ABU DHABI 1621

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, PDEV, MPOL, TC
SUBJECT: RASHID SPEAKS OUT ON CONSTITUTIONAL DISPUTES

REF: ABU DHABI 1551 AND PREVIOUS

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: IN UNUSUAL EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH OBSCURE UAE DAILY PUBLISHED JUNE 5, UAE VICE PRESIDENT AND RULER OF DUBAI SHAIKH RASHID BIN SAID AL-MAKTOUM EXPLAINED THE REASONS WHY HE HAS DEMANDED OF UAE PRESIDENT/ABU DHABI RULER SHAIKH ZAYID A REVIEW OF ALL CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS AND GOVERNMENT DECISIONS TAKEN SINCE FEDERATION CAME INTO EXISTENCE IN 1971. RASHID REFUTED PRESS STORIES THAT HE SEEKS TO RESTORE SITUATION IN UAE TO WHAT IT WAS BEFORE FEDERATION AND PROTESTED THAT HIS MOTIVES ARE PURELY TO ASSURE THAT ALL ACTIONS TAKEN ARE IN CONFORMITY WITH PROVISIONAL CONSTITUTION. OSTENSIBLY RELEASED TO COUNTER FOREIGN ARAB PRESS STORIES HE CALLED MISLEADING, RASHID'S INTERVIEW HAS RECEIVED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SOME NEGATIVE REACTIONS IN ABU DHABI WHERE THERE IS ANNOYANCE OVER HIS DECISION TO AIR UAE DIRTY LINEN IN PUBLIC. BRINGING ISSUE INTO OPEN, HOWEVER, COULD BE FIRST STEP TOWARD PUBLIC DISCUSSION OF THE ISSUES AND STIMULATION OF POPULAR PRESSURES ON RULERS TO REACH A COMPROMISE. END SUMMARY.

2. SAWT AL-UMMAH, OBSCURE UAE DAILY PUBLISHED IN SHARJAH

BUT WITH HEAD OFFICE IN ABU DHABI, CARRIED ON FRONT-PAGE IN ITS JUNE 5 EDITION TEXT OF INTERVIEW BETWEEN ITS EDITOR AHMAD SULTAN JABIR

AND SHAIKH RASHID. RASHID RARELY GIVES PRESS INTERVIEWS AND THIS IS FIRST ONE WE'VE SEEN. OSTENSIBLE PURPOSE OF INTERVIEW AS EDITION PUT IT WAS "TO PIERCE CURTAIN OF SILENCE" DRAWN DOWN OVER CURRENT CONSTITUTIONAL AND POLITICAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN RASHID AND UAE PRESIDENT/RULER OF ABU DHABI SHAIKH ZAYID BIN SULTAN AL NAHAYYAN. IN FACT, INTERVIEW GIVES APPEARANCE OF HAVING BEEN STAGED BY RASHID IN ORDER ENABLE HIM TO RESPOND TO REPORTS CARRIED LAST MONTH IN CAIRO'S AL-AHRAM AND PREPRINTED IN KUWAITI PAPER AL-ANBAA PURPORTING TO GIVE DETAILS OF SIX POINT LETTER WHICH RASHID HAD SENT TO ZAYID SEEKING REVIEW OF NUMBER OF CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES. RASHID DID NOT SEEK TO DENY EXISTENCE OF THIS LETTER OR THE SUBSTANCE OF THE POINTS WHICH IT CONTAINED. RATHER, HIS PURPOSE DURING THE INTERVIEW SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN TO REFUTE ALLEGATIONS IN FOREIGN PRESS THAT DUBAI IS OPPOSED TO UNIFICATION OF THE UAE ARMED FORCES AND THAT IT WISHES TO UNDO ALL STEPS TOWARD FEDERATION THAT HAVE BEEN ACCOMPLISHED OVER THE PAST SIX YEARS.

3. INTERVIEW CONDUCTED IN SUCH A WAY THAT RASHID ABLE TO GET POINTS CONTAINED IN HIS LETTER INTO PUBLIC RECORD WHILE "CORRECTING" WHAT HE CALLED MISLEADING OR BIASED PRESS COMMENTAIRES REGARDING HIS PURPORTED INTENTIONS. INTERVIEW COVERED FOLLOWING ISSUES:
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--A. RASHID RECONFIRMED HIS COMMITMENT TO PROVISIONAL CONSTITUTION OF 1971. ANY ENCROACHMENT ON CONSTITUTIONAL PRINCIPLES WILL MERELY CREATE DIFFICULTIES AND DIVISIONS WHICH SHOULD BE AVOIDED. THIS IS REASON WHY DUBAI HAS REQUESTED REVIEW OF ALL CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS AND FEDERAL LAWS ADOPTED SINCE 1971 TO SEE IF THEY FOLLOWED SPECIFIED PROCEDURES FOR AMENDMENT AND ARE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CONSTITUTION.

--B. RASHID SAID HE HAS NO QUARREL WITH PRINCIPLE OF ARMED FORCES UNIFICATION AND INDEED HAS DONE HIS UTMOST TO PROMOTE IT. HOWEVER, UNIFICATION MUST BE ACCOMPLISHED IN FULLY CONSTITUTIONAL MANNER AND NOT IN ACCORDANCE WITH INDIVIDUAL DECISIONS (AN OBVIOUS REFERENCE TO ZAYID'S UNILATERAL ISSUANCE OF FEBRUARY 1, 1978 MILITARY REORGANIZATION DECREE WITHOUT FIRST OBTAINING FORMAL APPROVAL OF SUPREME COUNCIL OF RULERS INCLUDING RASHID.).

--C. IT WAS NOT RASHID WHO EVER SAID THAT HE WANTED EVERYTHING TO BE PUT BACK TO WHAT IT WAS BEFORE THE UNION. SUCH AN ALLEGATION IS MERELY CHEAP INTRIGUING UNWORTHY OF COMMENT.

--C. IN CALLING FOR ABROGATION OF ZAYID'S DECREE
CREATING NEW POST OF ARMED FORCES COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF AND
NAMING TO IT HIS SON SULTAN BIN ZAYID, RASHID IS SEEKING TO
RECTIFY ACTION TAKEN UNCONSTITUTIONALLY AS MATTER HAD NOT FIRST
BEEN APPROVED AND RECOMMENDED TO SUPREME COUNCIL BY THE
COUNCIL OF MINISTERS.

--E. RASHID DENIED THAT HE HAD PROPOSED FOR ABU DHABI AND
DUBAI A SPECIAL RIGHT OF VETO NOT GIVEN TO OTHER EMIRATES,
THEREBY ADVOCATING A "DUOPOLY" RATHER THAN A FEDERATION.
HE NOTED HOWEVER THAT PROVISIONAL CONSTITUTION REQUIRES THAT
SUBSTANTIVE DECISIONS OF SUPREME COUNCIL MUST BE PASSED BY
VOTE OF FIVE OF ITS SEVEN MEMBERS AND THAT BOTH ABU DHABI AND
DUBAI MUST VOTE WITH MAJORITY.
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--F. ESTABLISHMENT OF A PERMANENT FEDERAL CAPITAL WITHIN
SEVEN YEARS IS SPECIFIED IN THE PROVISIONAL CONSTITUTION YET TO
DATE NOTHING HAS BEEN DONE TO EVEN BEGIN PREPARATIONS FOR THIS
STEP. RASHID BRUSHED ASIDE AS IRRELEVANT ARGUMENTS THAT
CONSTRUCTION OF AN ENTIRELY NEW FEDERAL CAPITAL WOULD DIVERT
BILLIONS OF DOLLARS FROM DEVELOPMENT AND ARAB AID PROGRAMS.

--G. THE PRESS, SAID RASHID IN AN AFTERWORD, NEEDS TO BE
MORE CAREFUL ABOUT WHAT IT REPORTS AND COMMENTS UPON SO AS
NOT TO MISLEAD AND CONTRIBUTE TO WIDENING DIFFERENCES IN THE
CURRENT SITUATION.

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FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
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4. RASHID'S REMARKS WERE GIVEN EXTENSIVE COVERAGE ON DUBAI TV EVENING OF JUNE 5 AND EXTENSIVE EXCERPTS APPEARED IN DUBAI-BASED ENGLISH LANGUAGE KHALIJ TIMES JUNE 6. SO FAR THEY HAVE BEEN ENTIRELY IGNORED BY ABU DHABI TV AND UAE GOVERNMENT-OWNED PRESS PUBLISHED IN ABU DHABI. REACTION TO RASHID INTERVIEW AMONG SOME OFFICIALS IN ABU DHABI HAS BEEN DISTINCTLY NEGATIVE. FEELING HERE IS ONE OF ANNOYANCE THAT DUBAI RULER HAS AIRED FEDERATION'S POLITICAL DIRTY LINEN IN PUBLIC, THEREBY CONTRIBUTING TO INCREASE IN TENSIONS AND DISAGREEMENTS AMONG THE EMIRATES.

5. COMMENT: RASHID COMES THROUGH IN THIS INTERVIEW AND IN HIS COMMENTS AND WRITINGS ELSEWHERE AS A "STRICT CONSTRUCTIONIST" ON CONSTITUTIONAL QUESTION. HIS EMPHASIS ON LEGALISMS AND ON LITERAL ADHERENCE TO PROVISIONS OF THE CONSTITUTION MAY STRIKE CONSTITUTIONAL JURISTS AS REASONABLE; HOWEVER, IT IS VIEWED IN ABU DHABI AS A MERE DEVICE TO PRESERVE DUBAI'S VIRTUAL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AUTONOMY FROM ALL FEDERAL REGULATIONS AND CONTROL AND TO FRUSTRATE ZAYID'S EFFORTS TO RATIONALIZE THE SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT AND TO IMPROVE EFFICIENCY, ESPECIALLY OF THE DEFENSE AND SECURITY APPARATUS. FOR AMERICANS THE DEBATE MAY SEEM TO ECHO THOSE BETWEEN FEDERALISTS AND STATES RIGHTS OF 150 YEARS AGO, WITH THE CHILLING RECOLLECTION THAT ULTIMATELY THAT DEBATE WAS ONLY SETTLED THROUGH A BLOODY CIVIL WAR. HOWEVER, RASHID'S REPEATED INSISTENCE THAT HIS QUARREL IS NOT OVER SUBSTANCE BUT WITH PROCEDURE ON ISSUES LIKE MILITARY UNIFICATION OFFERS A FAINT POSSIBILITY FOR THE WORKING OUT OF A COMPROMISE. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN HOWEVER WHETHER EITHER ZAYID AND HIS ADVISERS OR RASHID HAVE THE VISION OF A DANIEL WEBSTER OR A HENRY CLAY TO REACH ONE.

6. MEANWHILE RASHID HAS OPENED THE FLOOR FOR PUBLIC DEBATE ON THE ISSUES. WE CAN ONLY WAIT TO SEE WHETHER ZAYID WILL RESPOND BY PUTTING HIS OWN CASE OPENLY OR WHETHER THERE WILL BE AN EFFORT TO RESTORE THE FABRIC OF THE "CURTAIN OF SILENCE" WHICH UAE OFFICIALS HAVE PREFERRED TO DRAW OVER THE DISPUTE. ONE INTRIGUING STORY (RELATED TO US BY INDIAN AMBASSADOR) IS THAT SAUD AL-UMMAH IS ACTUALLY OWNED BY UAE FOREIGN MINISTER

AND CLOSE ZAYID ADVISER AHMAD KHALIFAH AL-SUWAIDI.
ITS EDITOR ALSO SAID TO BE CLOSE TO ZAYID'S SONS. ACCORDING
THIS STORY, SUWAIDI DELIBERATELY ENGINEERED SAWT AL-UMMAH
INTERVIEW WITH RASHID PRECISELY FOR PURPOSE OF BRINGING DISPUTE
OUT INTO OPEN. IF STORY IS TRUE (WE WILL ATTEMPT TO CONFIRM
WHETHER SUWAIDI HAS A RELATIONSHIP WITH SAWT AL-UMMAH) IT COULD
MEAN THAT SUWAIDI BELIEVES PUBLIC DISCUSSION OF THE ISSUES WOULD
BE CATHARTIC AND LIKELY TO AROUSE POPULAR PRESSURES ON BOTH
RASHID AND ZAYID TO REACH A COMPROMISE IN ORDER TO PRESERVE
THE FEDERAL UNION.

7. TRANSLATED TEXTS OF SAWT AL-UMMAH INTERVIEW AND OTHER
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DOCUMENTS PERTAINING TO CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES BEING POUCHED
DEPARTMENT THIS WEEK.
DICKMAN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
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Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DISPUTES, NEGOTIATIONS, INVESTIGATIONS, CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 06 jun 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
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Expiration:
Film Number: D780236-0424
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Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780694/aaaadcnk.tel
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TAGS: PINT, PGOV, PDEV, MPOL, TC, (AL-MAKTOUM, RASHID BIN SAID)
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Type: TE
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